

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: June 7, 1978

SUBJECT: United States Relations with Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia.

PARTICIPANTS: Representative Gus Yatron, Chairman, Inter-American Affairs Sub-Committee, House International Relations Committee;
David D. Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs;
Fernando E. Rondon, ARA/ECA.

COPIES TO: D, ARA, H, HA, PM, S/P, Amembassies Bogota, Buenos Aires and La Paz.

The meeting took place at the Under Secretary's initiative and lasted about 25 minutes.

The Under Secretary explained that he wanted to brief the Chairman on his visit to Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia.

The purpose of his visit to Argentina was to obtain an impression of what we might expect from Argentina in the future in order to determine whether something might be done to preserve our relationships with this important Latin country before the October Kennedy/Humphrey Amendment enters into force.

Mr. Newsom noted that he held discussions with President Videla, the commanders of the armed services, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior, and with human rights groups, including representatives of the "mothers of the disappeared". He noted that he placed special emphasis on the question of detainees, disappearances, and visits by international organizations.

Mr. Newsom mentioned that of the 3,300 detainees, approximately 1,200 were arrested under the previous government. The succeeding military government says it has insufficient information on this category of

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detainees. The Minister of Interior told Mr. Newsom, however, that steps are being taken to release or charge these prisoners. Newsom observed that neither President Videla nor the Minister of Interior were willing to provide timetables or indicate when such releases actually might take place. //

Mr. Newsom said that he emphasized to Argentine officials the desirability of providing information to the families of disappeared persons. The Minister of Interior declared that such an effort is being made. Newsom noted to Yatron that it is his impression that a satisfactory mechanism to deal with this question has not been established yet. //

The Under Secretary continued that he mentioned to the Argentines the desirability of an invitation to the OAS Inter-American Human Rights Committee. Newsom noted our hope that the Argentines might do something about this during the upcoming OAS General Assembly, which begins June 21.

If Argentina takes action on the steps outlined above, for example if it invites the Human Rights Committee, the Executive would be prepared to start selling training to Argentina. If that country takes other positive steps, we would begin to approve arms cases, notably spare parts. Mr. Newsom noted that our actions are dependent on Argentine actions.

The Under Secretary added that there is no embargo on non-military sales to Argentina. There are difficulties, however, if the end-user/purchaser is military. Mr. Newsom referred to Export-Import Bank credits and the fact that these are being held in abeyance pending Congressional action on Eximbank.

The Chairman appeared satisfied on the Argentine portion of the briefing and turned the latter part of the meeting to a discussion of narcotics questions. He asked whether Bolivia is taking action to combat narcotics. Mr. Newsom replied that it is his

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impression that President Banzer has been very cooperative. Newsom observed that Bolivia appears to be doing more than Colombia, where politicians succumb sometimes to corruption. He mentioned our efforts to secure better treatment for our prisoners in Bolivia, something that should be accomplished by Senate passage of a prisoner exchange treaty. The Bolivians have been somewhat confused, Mr. Newsom mentioned, by our insistence on better treatment of prisoners and tougher narcotics enforcement. Mr. Newsom added that we are seeking to implement a program of coca crop substitution in Bolivia initiated by the previous Administration. The Bolivian Government, however, is hesitant to move actively on this matter during an electoral period.

The Chairman asked about Colombia's new policies under Turbay. The Under Secretary commented that Turbay probably would follow the same basic policies as President Lopez. The Chairman then asked about Turbay's involvement in narcotics, noting that such allegations were made during the Sub-committees trip to Colombia. Mr. Rondon said there was apparently some circumstantial evidence to this effect but that he believed the United States had regretted that a false impression might have been given.

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